

**Witosława Frankowska, Kolędowanie na Kaszubach.
Dzieje kołęd na Pomorzu od XVI do XXI wieku
[Singing Christmas carols in Kashubia. The history of
Christmas carols in Pomerania from the 16th to the
21st century], Warszawa 2015. ISBN 9788363877613.
Summary**

There are not many festivals in the church calendar that attract such a significant number of liturgical occasions supported by words and music as Christmas and the New Year. In some areas of Poland, this period includes Advent which is an integral part of the religious focus of the celebration of the birth of Christ. Given that until now, there has been no monographic work dedicated to carols in Pomerania, against a backdrop of carol singing in the broader sense, it is the intention of the author to provide an insight from the perspective of an insider. On the basis of documentary evidence (manuscripts and printed matter), a carol genre spanning four centuries can be observed in Kashubia. The genre developed within the following three directions which frequently co-existed:

- church works, historically the oldest, first mentioned in 1586,
- folk music, first mentioned in 1843,
- traditional, regional music from the 1930s onwards.

A characteristic of Kashubian carols is their ongoing development. They differ from carols originating in eastern Poland as they did not stay in their contemporary form, be it folk or church. They developed into regional carols, deeply set within their local reality and reacting to contemporary social issues. This phenomenon needs to be seen within the context of a strong regional identity, which was articulated by a need to retain and preserve Kashubian tradition and express it in its own language. Between 1935 and 1990, this regional creativity resulted in the composition of several dozen pieces that form a unique bridge between folk carols and modern Christmas songs, which are far more prone to mass culture stimuli.

The current increase in number of Kashubian carols is a reflection of the increased standing of Kashubian culture visible since the last decade of the 20th century. This is particularly true of language, which has become commonplace in church practice, at school, in magazines, radio and television.

The significance of the integrating role played by Kashubian carols during Christmas festivities cannot be overestimated. With the inevitable passing of older forms of celebration, still from time to time heroically resurrected by teachers and enthusiasts, a new form of Christmas celebration is gaining popularity, i.e. music revues, festivals, concerts in churches and halls which generally do not require hands-on participation. In spite of the fact that passive celebration is become the norm, the sheer abundance of such meetings during the Christmas holiday period is a sure guarantee of former traditions being passed down to the next generation.

Songs in general and Christmas carols in particular link generations. But they also bear witness to history and the development of language. Their traditional link with decorum demonstrates a deep interconnection of the world of nature, space, folk beliefs; symbiosis of magic and religion. A gradual shift away from traditional forms of Christmas-wishes carol-singing in which there was a clear distinction between the performers and the audience, led to the disappearance of this form of culture. The key area of church and secular carol-singing remains unchanged. This co-existence, spanning centuries, led to significant influence upon the form and textual structure, as well as inevitable complementary stimulation. This can be seen in the degree of ambivalence with which hymnals and songbooks identify these works. Church pieces were often classified as secular and vice versa.

This monographic thesis consists of six chapters.

The first one, titled *The History of Research of Kashubian Carol-Singing*, looks at sources and literature on Pomeranian carols from the 16th century until the present. This includes a musical reconstruction of the oldest surviving Kashubian carols to words by Szymon Krofej dating from 1586. These examples are presented in the *Annexe*. A further section discusses the fate of Catholic and Lutheran carols, how conditions that influenced their development, written and recorded sources from key institutions that document Pomeranian music culture. *Kolęda Kaszubów (The Kashubs' Carol)* occupies a special place due to its unique ethnographic-sociological significance.

In the next chapter, *Religious Traditions and Customs during Advent, Christmas, The New Year and Easter*, the key features of communal carol-singing are presented, placing them between the sacred and the profane.

Based on ethnographic sources, key features of festive celebrations are presented. This includes Easter, the period that has the oldest examples of spring-time communal singing in the whole Pomerania, which sadly, is currently disappearing. This chapter demonstrates the changing nature of religious customs over time as well as the dynamics of change in folk culture, swinging between relicts of pagan mythology and a more literally Christian interpretation of Christmas. It has also turned out to be necessary to systematise definitions regarding groups of carol-singers.

The Classification of Subjects in Christmas Songs is dedicated to typological issues. The differentiation of the carol function and their content resulted in the need to reorder material in the area of dominant Christmas carols – in church and at home. In spite of this distinction not always being respected, this classification method allows one to identify characteristic features for each genre. It allows one to track the development process of carols in their dualistic form, which appears to be the most appropriate. It may also show ‘transient genres’, i. e. musical and/or lyrical adaptations of popular Polish and foreign carols. This applies to contemporary carols from Pomerania. A separate place has been given to Christmas carols and instrumental music in regional plays and shows. The author also attempts to determine the scale of inspiration of local and national composers derived from Kashubian carols.

The subsequent chapter, *Carol Melody Characteristics*, presents the results of the analysis of 190 Kashubian carol tunes (40 church carols, 70 folk carols and 80 regional carols). The subject of the analysis was their formal characteristics, song ambitus, types of scales, tonal gravity, structure of initial and cadenza figures, metre/rhythm, grouping in basic melodic styles (descending, ascending, fluent).

Regional Characteristics of the Kashubian Carol Repertoire is an attempt to show the degree of originality of the material in question. A complex analysis of the lyrics in which the semantic layer plays a key role in the qualification of the material was the starting point. Alongside semantic meaning, additional features were articulated that bore reference to the regional character of these carols, i. e. symbolism, folk instrument usage, popular Kashubian dance tunes. The lyrics became basic in preparing a portrait of the regional inhabitants.

The final chapter, *Carol-Singing in a Historical and Inter-Regional Perspective*, is an attempt to place the researched repertoire within the framing of Polish and European carol-singing traditions. The search for autonomic

characteristics of Kashubian carols required vast comparative analyses. 829 folk carols (as well as their variations from Kashubia, Warmia, Masuria, Masovia, the Lublin area, the Rzeszow area, the area close to the Polish Carpathian mountains, Upper Silesia and the region around Cracow), were looked at. In the process of establishing common features in the material and the degree of local variability, the carol bibliography turned out to be extremely useful.

The conclusions in the sub-section titled *Autonomic Features of Kashubian Carols* are a summary of this work.

The Annexe contains reconstructed melodies from the oldest carols in Pomerania dating from the 16th century as well folk and regional carols most frequently mentioned in the course of analysis. *The Annexe* also has *The Tables* that document the effect of inter-regional comparative analysis.

The Index lists names of persons mentioned in connection with the subject as well as the authors of articles considered in *The Bibliography*. The names of musical informers as well as people depicted in photographs.

The Carol Bibliography lists sources of carols in various manuscript form. It includes a detailed description of Kashubian carols, place, they were written down and published history of their publication.

The Bibliography of Folk Carols was assembled on the basis of introductions and in the case of regional carols, on the basis of titles given by their composers.

The voluminous proportions of *The General Bibliographic Index* meant that it was necessary to limit entries to sources used and mentioned in the writing of this thesis.

The musical examples that state the name, surname, date of birth and address of the informant, the surname of the author of the entry and the date the entry was made. Fragments of these carols, be it with or without melodies, are quoted retaining the dialectological differences. This is due to the author's deep conviction that only such a form is capable of expressing the depth of content without the loss of cultural truth, traits of performer's personality as well as constituting a processional documentation of the development of the Kashubian language and its written form.

Translated by Anna and Adam Gosiewscy